

NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Education

\$14.9-MILLION EXPANSION MAKES SCHOOL SAFER

MILL BAY – Education Minister Shirley Bond today officially opened the \$14.9-million expansion of George E. Bonner middle school, which provides students and staff with a safer place to learn and teach.

“This school is a great example of the provincial government, the school district and the community working together to enhance student learning,” said Bond. “George E. Bonner has been transformed into a bright, open, state-of-the-art school that’s more structurally sound and environmentally friendly.”

The expansion includes a seismic upgrade of the existing structure and the installation of fire sprinklers throughout the school.

A new south wing features 22 classrooms, a multipurpose room with gym and theatre capability, and a new library. The design allowed for environmental improvements throughout the school, including a waste water treatment system, new storm drains and a water reservoir.

George E. Bonner middle school will serve 700 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. Before renovations, about 500 students were enrolled in grades 7 and 8.

“I’m amazed at how this school has changed since I started teaching in 1965,” said school board chair Brian Simmons. “This project brings an impressive openness to the school, and a new central atrium provides a much-needed central gathering space for the students that didn’t exist before.”

The new multipurpose room will be a showpiece for the expanded school. It has theatre lighting and sound, and can seat over 300 people. The space can also be closed off from the rest of the school making it ideal for community events and productions.

A refurbished gym in the old wing features upgraded change rooms and a lift so physically challenged students can get better access to other parts of the school. A new sports field meets international standards for soccer matches and has an innovative sand base that will increase use even under difficult weather conditions.

The old shop facilities, home economics room, art room and computer lab have also been renovated.

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The seismic upgrade to George E. Bonner Middle School is in addition to the \$1.5-billion seismic program to provide students and staff across B.C. with safer schools. As well, since 2001 the Province has spent over \$1 billion to complete 26 new schools, 32 replacements, 140 additions and 22 renovation projects across British Columbia. By the end of 2008-09, the Province will have invested more than \$2.8 billion in school capital and maintenance projects across British Columbia.

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